

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 14, 2018

Agenda Item: 2018 Fall Upland Game Bird Quotas and Limits

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Upland game bird season dates for 2018 were approved in February 2018. Other than normal calendar date rotation, no changes to the 2017 adopted quotas and limits are proposed.

Some sage-grouse lek counts were delayed or biologists were unable to do them because of late winter weather and poor conditions. Data for this year is not all entered and analyzed yet, but discussions with area biologists indicate poorer production than last year in much of Montana. This is not unexpected given the drought of last summer and fall followed by a long and snowy winter. However, conditions so far this spring, with good soil moisture for insect and forb production during hatching and early brood rearing, should be good for early sage-grouse chick survival.

Sage-grouse populations naturally cycle up and down, and we want to make the Commission and public aware that we have been expecting a downturn. Barring severe weather or disease, this cycling is natural and expected and unrelated to carefully regulated hunting.

Public Involvement Process & Results

If approved, public comment will be taken at this meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

This proposal is based upon field observations and regional input and is consistent with statewide upland game bird management.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends adopting the 2018 upland game bird bag and possession limits as unchanged from 2017.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Fish & Wildlife Commission approve the proposed 2018 upland game bird bag and possession limits as proposed by FWP and that all other elements except for regular calendar rotation remain unchanged from 2017.